

Spector Dance

2017 Press Kit



# East West

**a multidisciplinary performance and  
educational outreach program about gang violence**

[www.spectordance.org](http://www.spectordance.org) | 831.384.1050

# East West



*"It's a daring piece. It's a serious piece. It's a dark and difficult subject. There is the joy in it of seeing performance come together just so, there are affirmative messages awaiting, the players are all earnestly committed. It deserves an audience."*

**Walter Ryce,**  
writer for the Monterey Weekly



**East West** is a multidisciplinary performance piece inspired by filmed interviews with a wide variety of individuals touched by gang culture. **East West** blends rap and contemporary music, hip hop and contemporary dance, film and photography to look at why youth are attracted to gangs, the brutal reality of gang life, and how people find their way out. **East West** is moving, disturbing, and ultimately uplifting.

A group of outstanding collaborators have joined forces to create a powerful reflection of the realities of gang life and the impact on families, communities, and society as a whole. **East West** looks at ways that dance and the arts can contribute solutions to the critical issue of gang activity that plagues the streets of Monterey County and countless cities around the nation.

Lead Artist and Creative Director, Fran Spector Atkins, says, "With rap music, dance, visual images and spoken word, **East West** brings together a wide range of perspectives, serves as a catalyst for conversation, and provides inspiration for transformation."

To create the piece, SpectorDance worked with at-risk young adults at Rancho Cielo, a 100-acre campus in East Salinas offering educational/vocational training and recreation for under-served young adults in Monterey County. Started by Judge John Phillips, a retired local judge, Rancho Cielo's vision is to transform the lives of at-risk young adults and empower them to become accountable, competent, productive and responsible citizens.

As in other SpectorDance projects, Spector Atkins is collaborating with William Roden, media artist. Spector Atkins and Roden filmed interviews with nineteen individuals associated with the culture of gangs, which became the starting point for the creative development of this project. Other key collaborators include Associate Director/Stage Manager / featured performer Los Angeles based Jones Welch, Director of *Not Man Apart*. New York City based rap artist, Baba Brinkman, created the "rap/soundscape" incorporating words directly from the interviews, and urban dance was choreographed by Philip Wainwright. Award winning photographs by Robert Yager are also integrated into the performance.

## East West Residency Programs

Along with performances of *East West*, SpectorDance can offer a variety of dance activities tailored to the needs of each venue such as:

- Pre or post performance discussions
- Movement classes in a wide variety of dance styles from urban to classical for all ages and levels of experience
- Week-long choreography workshops with the goal of creating new works with at-risk populations or other populations. Works created can be presented along with *East West* performances.

*“Shifting peoples imagination about how to work with young people, how to work with the most troubled and to bring them out of their troubles through their own gifts and geniuses and capacity to be fuller human beings. The story is what is vital. There is no disconnect between what happens in the performance and the people watching it. They realize it is my story and they can connect with it. Live performance, like all these the stories we are talking about, it engages a part of you that does not get engaged. Art wakes up the deep self, the deep psyche. It is a place that needs to be awakened. Art does that in many ways.”*

**Luis Rodreguis,**

*LA Poet Laurette, former gang member*





## EAST WEST CREDITS:

*Creative Director & Lead Artist:* **Fran Spector Atkin**  
*Associate Director & Performer:* **Jones Welsh**  
*Media Artist & Collaborator:* **William Roden**  
*Rap Artist:* **Baba Brinkman**  
*Music:* **Zoe Keating, Ethel Ensemble,  
Paul Jeбанassam**  
*Performers:* **Annie Talmadge, Colton Sterling,  
Phillip Wainwright (Hip Hop Choreographer)**  
*Photographs:* **Robert Yager, William Roden**  
*Advisor:* **Luis Rodriquez**  
*(Award winning author and poet)*  
*Video & Photography:* **William & Patricia Roden**  
*(New Dawn Studios)*

## VIDEO LINKS TO EXCERPTS FROM *East West*

**Arms Race** (1 min 13 sec)

**Mother** (2 min 2 sec)

**Prison** (1 min 13 sec)

**Transformation** (2 min 6 sec)

**Ways Out** (36 sec)

**Promotional Trailer**

**Full performance**



**Major Funding for East West** is from the James Irvine Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, the Community Foundation for Monterey County, Monterey Peninsula Foundation, Harden Foundation, Rita & Luis Echenique Charitable Foundation, Nancy Buck Ransom Foundation, Monterey County Weekly Fund, S.T.A.R. Foundation, Arts Council for Monterey County, Tanimura Family Foundation, & many other businesses and individuals.



## East West Collaborators Biographies



**Lead Artist/Creative Director Fran Spector Atkins** is the Artistic Director of SpectorDance and its School, Company, Community Outreach, Creative Projects and Choreographer Showcase. Her credits include a BS in Occupational Therapy from Boston University, an MFA from Mills College in Dance and Choreography and Certification in Laban Movement Analysis from the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies (NYC). She has directed schools in NYC, Cleveland and Monterey and has choreographed throughout the United States and abroad. Some of her outstanding experiences include being a guest artist at Oberlin College and Brown University and in Denmark, Egypt, England, Israel, Italy, Guam and Taiwan. Spector Atkins has received numerous awards including the prestigious Dewar's Young Artist Recognition Award for the State of California, was featured in Carmel Magazine as one of 10 individuals making "altruistic contributions to the community," and she was highlighted in the film "Luminaries of Monterey County". SpectorDance was selected by The Arts Council for Monterey County as the "Outstanding Arts Organization in Monterey County," and as a national finalist for the Ovation TV award for "Excellence in the Performing Arts."



**Media Artist/Primary Collaborator William Roden**, is owner/operator of New Dawn Studios, a production house in Carmel, providing services for broadcast television and corporate communications. His current clients include National Geographic, CSPAN, ESPN2/HD, HGTV/HD, Discovery Canada, Pebble Beach Company, Airborne, and BMW. His work is varied with production of music videos, documentaries, commercials and creative projects. Projects made for public television include The World of Healthy Living and Henry Miller Is Not Dead, for which he received a Silver award at the Houston International Film Festival. The World of Healthy Healing took Roden to China to film traditional Eastern healing modalities and has aired on 20 PBS affiliates nationwide.



**Rap Artist/Baba Brinkman** is a New York City-based artist, writer, and scholar. His master's thesis in English Literature drew parallels between hip hop music and literary poetry. After graduating in 2003, he began his career as a rap troubadour. To date, Baba has created five hip hop theater shows including The Canterbury Tales Remixed and The Rap Guide to Evolution, and has spoken at several TEDx conferences. He has performed seven seasons at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and has released ten solo albums through his record label, Fuse Lit Records. The Rap Guide to Evolution won the prestigious Scotsman Fringe First Award in Edinburgh in 2009 and toured the UK, Australia and the USA, including a five month run off Broadway where it was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance.



**Associate Director/Production Manager /Performer Jones Welsh** is a performer, administrator, and arts activist. Jones received his degree in theatre and dance from the University of Washington in 2000, then returned for the Non-Profit Management Certificate Program after 2 years of working in New York. Jones is the Associate Artistic Director of Not Man Apart - Physical Theatre Ensemble, establishing the organization in 2000 and combining forces with John Farmanesh-Bocca in 2009 to co-produce dynamic movement plays that combine elements of dance, acrobatics, music, video, and powerful physical performance. Jones also co-hosts the LA Improv Dance Festival, Somatic Movement Arts Festival, and Shakespeare Santa Monica. After completing five years touring with Diavolo - Architecture in Motion, Jones was the Diavolo Institute Director, establishing sustainable community outreach programs in Los Angeles and a professional movement training program at the Diavolo Studio.



**Hip Hop Choreographer/Performer Phillip Wainwright** began his career as a street dancer, choreographing for two Hip Hop teams and a show choir through High School. After attending Hip Hop intensives in Los Angeles, Wainwright studied classical dance as a minor at Texas Tech University. While reigning a 3 year residency as Director of ‘Dancer’s With Soul,’ The Texas Tech Hip Hop Team, Phillip studied Capoeira among other martial arts, and choreographed for 3 Platinum winning competition teams. Most recently, Phillip Wainwright has performed for NBA halftime shows, the Royal Family of Bahrain, won both World and National Championships with the Go Dance West Coast Swing Team, guest choreographed for The American College Dance Association, as well as appearing on Televised shows like America’s Got Talent and Tru Tv’s FakeOff. Currently, with titles like Director of Hip Hop for US Performing Arts in Malibu, California, Wainwright looks to utilize his experiences to create story through the mediums of urban arts and movement, while continuing to learn.



**Performer Colton Sterling** was born and raised in Los Angeles. He was adopted twice (once at birth and again at age four). At age five, he asked his dads to take dance classes. Since that time he has done gymnastics, acting, competitive ice skating and dance. He graduated from the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts in 2014. Currently Colton is dancing with several companies in Los Angeles.



**Performer Anne-Marie Talmadge** is a dancer, speaker, health coach, and business mentor. Committed to a life of self mastery and contribution, Anne-Marie, has traveled the world performing and training with such companies as Alvin Ailey, Barak Marshall’s Bridge Choreography Exchange In Israel, Spector Dance, and Multiplex. Along with DIAVOLO’s VOLO company, Anne-Marie, currently performs with Nickerson Rossi Dance Company, Sean Greene’s Shield Wall, and Not Man Apart Physical Theater Ensemble. Anne-Marie is a California Institute of the Arts graduate and Founder of Art and Action. “Live authentically, courageously, and inspired.”



Arlene Mejorado

**Advisor Luis J. Rodriguez** served as Los Angeles Poet Laureate from 2014-2016. His latest poetry chapbook is *Borrowed Bones*, released in 2016 from Curbstone Books/ Northwestern University Press. He is also an award-winning writer in various genres, with 15 books in poetry, children’s literature, short stories, the novel, and non-fiction, including the bestselling memoir *Always Running*, *La Vida Loca*, *Gang Days in L.A.* Luis is also founding editor of Tia Chucha Press, a small cross cultural publishing house, and co-founder of Tia Chucha’s Cultural Center & Bookstore in L.A’s San Fernando Valley.

***“Dance is a way to break out of your shell, to let go of yourselves and be you”***

**Rancho Ceilo student**

***“Art is my serenity. With education, I believe we can put an end to the madness on the street.”***

**Former ranking gang member  
who spent 34 years in prison**



## ABOUT SPECTORDANCE

SpectorDance was founded in 1997 by artistic director Fran Spector Atkins. The mission of SpectorDance is to establish a vibrant center for the performing arts offering a wide variety of dance-based activities that connects diverse artists and audiences, bridges disciplines through collaboration, and celebrates the power of dance to inform and inspire. The vision of SpectorDance is to utilize dance and the arts as a vehicle to open doors, ignite creativity, and fuel the human spirit.

With generous community support, SpectorDance has established a School, a Company, Educational Outreach Programs, SpectorDance On-Site, and the *Choreographer's Showcase*. All our programs are housed in or administered from our state-of-the-art studio and performance venue in Marina. The SpectorDance Company presents original multidisciplinary performances using a signature style that blends music, spoken word, and visual media with dance to explore social issues and themes that are relevant to our community. Examples of projects include *Figures in the Dust* (2006), a collaboration with the National Steinbeck Center, inspired by *The Grapes of Wrath*; *Common Ground* (2008), a piece about issues in California agriculture based on interviews with farm workers and agricultural experts; *Ocean* (2010-2013), a collaboration with MBARI about ocean issues; and *East West* (2014-2015), a collaboration with Rancho Cielo about gang culture.

SpectorDance has received many awards, including being selected as a finalist for the Ovation TV for *Excellence in the Performing Arts* and the Arts Council for Monterey County award for *Outstanding Arts Organization in Monterey County*. Fran was featured in the film *Luminaries of Monterey County* and in *Carmel Magazine* as "one of ten individuals in Monterey County making significant altruistic contributions to our community." Fran has twice been a presenter at TEDx Monterey.



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# MONTEREY COUNTY WEEKLY

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## **The first look at SpectorDance's fluid and graphic gang-related dance piece, *East West*.**

Hundreds of Monterey County school children stomped their feet in appreciation for the efforts of the dancers, rapper and choreographer of this morning's performance of *East West*.

**Posted: Friday, October 24, 2014** by Walter Ryce - *Monterey County Weekly*

SpectorDance has been working on their multimedia dance piece, *East West*, for at least two years. Two performances are lined up: 7:30pm tonight, Friday, at Sherwood Hall in Salinas, and 8pm tomorrow, Saturday, at SpectorDance in Marina.

But there was a free preview at Sherwood Hall for Monterey County school kids this morning at 10am (well, more like 10:30am due to the logistics of corralling hundreds of kids into seats).

There were risks with a show like this. The subject could be too grave for dance, the topic too depressing. And there are subterranean issues of artists from outside the community purporting to tell that community's story back to it—but that's a discussion for another level.

One risky proposition that made itself apparent even outside, upon seeing frisky kids playing in line, from 5th grade to high school aged—is it too graphic for some of the kids? They nearly filled the 1,400-seat venue.

They came from Stevenson School, Millennium Charter School, Kamman School, Rancho Cielo, Mt. Toro High School, Boronda Meadows, Peacock Acres, and Los Padres. About 300 school children from Natividad Elementary didn't make it due to a clerical error, according to Jesse Banda, the event organizer and the Performing Arts and Events Sales Manager of collaborating partner, the Steinbeck Center.

Steinbeck Center's Curator of Marketing & Community Engagement, Marcos Cabrera, said later that with an issue that reaches into lives at a very young age, it requires getting to them first, before gangs do.

And *East West* is definitely advocating that kids not join gangs. And it does so fairly graphically and plenty artistically.

It opens with the rapper, Baba Brinkman, standing stage left at a mic stand, who begins by just talking about gang culture. Then he ramps up in his multi-syllabic rap, about getting high, getting into fights, and robbing people with guns. The refrain: "From the outside looking in, it's looking like a bunch of poisonous choices, but look again."

Six dancers enter, doing an ensemble dance sketch of young people, friends, hanging out. They do hip-hop dancing, something akin to a group routine from *So You Think You Can Dance*. The uptempo and street-sounding rap stops and an ominous classical cello score rises. A voice-over kicks in, one of many interviews with local people touched by gangs, that are played throughout the 12 vignettes of *East West*. The voices are from young people,



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talking about seeing fights every day, how an armed killer fled from police into their backyard, how they saw a boy get punched, fall, hit his head on a cement block and not get up.

While that's happening, photographs of gang life are projected onto the screen: A baby laying on a bed among stacks of money and guns; homies posing aggressively, pointing guns at the camera. The six dancers have been replaced by the two featured dancers who are practically subsumed by the enormous and captivating photographs, the evocative music, the voice-over stories. They perform contemporary dance moves that look familiar, and mostly in synch with the timbre of the rest of the multimedia experience, but the dancers seem diminutive in the mix. Sherwood Hall is an enormous space and can shrink people's presence and movements.

But it's effective nonetheless. It's also rough stuff. One woman narrates how she got word that her son had been killed. She conveys the confusion of the moment, the anger, the pain: "Is it true that \_\_\_\_\_ was shot last night? My body is shaking. Boom. In my stomach. I was a mad, angry mom who was hurt in her heart."

Her voice is filled with anguish still. On the screen behind her, a simple image of candles flickering. The woman featured dancer is performing in mourning black, maybe a little too energetically and gracefully for the story being narrated. One voice-over narration is by a man who has been locked up a long time, who describes some of the horrors he's seen inside prison: "I've seen a man burned to death. I've seen people stabbed in the face, in the eyes. Seen them get their throats slashed."

If this is what it takes to create an effective deterrent to young people joining gangs, a sort-of scared straight on stage, then maybe a little trauma will go a long way. But the show

ended with an affirmative and bright note. The message was about redemptive avenues in art, poetry, writing, dance; it was about life being worth living, about finding peace and joy on one's own terms. That final message of the piece seemed all the more brighter for having plunged us into violence and darkness. A lot of narrative arcs are like that. It makes for a powerful argument.

Cabrera, born and raised in Salinas, agrees with the argument for prevention, for full disclosure about the violence and mayhem of gang life, about getting these messages to kids early.

"I'm a parent. I grew up in this community so I think I have a little different perspective than folks not from this community or aren't too familiar with how easy it is to get caught up in the gang lifestyle. I remember when I was in 3rd grade and seeing gang graffiti on the walls and they were already representing their set."

After the performance, there was a Q&A with all the principal artists and dancers. One kid in the audience asked if any of them had ever considered joining a gang.

One of the dancers, the only one local, a young woman who also teaches hip-hop at SpectorDance, answered, "Yes. When I was six."

Later, Cabrera said, "I don't think you can get them too young. Exposing 5th graders to gang violence by people who lived it and got out, if you take the context, the material and the intent, you can make the argument that this is something the community can use. I think age appropriateness becomes secondary."

It's a daring piece. It's a serious piece. It's a dark and difficult subject. There is the joy in it of seeing performance come together just so, there are affirmative messages awaiting, the players are all earnestly committed. It deserves an audience.

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November 1, 2016

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in support of *East West*, a dance performance that deals with issues of gang recruitment, violence and the repercussions on families.

While it is about such a difficult topic, the performance is beautifully engaging, smart, funny and very moving. It incorporates a brilliant rap artist as 'narrator,' to guide the audience through a metaphoric trajectory of a young person recruited into a gang, the grief experienced with gang deaths, the horror of prison, and then the possibility of life after the gang.

All this is told through choreography with spoken word, music, video and projected graphics.

The choreography is not pedantic, but remarkably artistic and lovely to watch. I hope to present the show and believe other presenters should be exposed to it.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michele".

Michele Roberge  
Executive Director



## SpectorDance's East West

Posted on [October 1, 2015](#)

By Scott MacClelland

**SEEN AT** at Hartnell College last Saturday night, *East West* demonstrated how relevant to contemporary society dance can be. This work, inspired by Monterey County's unenviable reputation as home to the most violent gang-culture in California, enacts all the raw emotional content of gang warfare, prison life



and grieving families. Envisioned by creative director Fran Spector Atkins, it includes commentaries from youth who are vulnerable to gang culture, soul-searching words from affected people in the community and firsthand accounts of gang-violence. The production includes stunning visual imagery integrated by William Roden and gripping contextual recitations by rap artist Baba Brinkman. The dancers bring their highly physical talents to the co-creative process.

Colton Pierson Geiger, Anne-Marie Talmadge, Phillip Wainwright (hip hop choreographer) and associate director Jones Welsh are as much calisthenic athletes as creative artists. Talmadge's solo performance as the grieving mother brought some in the audience to tears, including me. Any city that suffers from gang-culture should see this program. In less than one hour, it makes an unforgettable, perhaps life-changing, impact. *(Jones Welsh photo by William Roden)*

This entry was posted in [DANCE REVIEWS](#) by [Scott MacClelland](#).



## **BOOKING INFORMATION**

*East West* is available for tour.

Contact Fran Spector Atkins

[spectordance@earthlink.net](mailto:spectordance@earthlink.net)

[www.spectordance.org](http://www.spectordance.org)



Phillip Wainwright; photo by William Roden/New Dawn Studios

*“East West is a universal tale in its depiction of humanity, struggle, grief, hope and the possibility for the transformation of the human spirit. It is about breaking down the walls and barriers that separate us from “the other,” to look deeply into the eyes of another human being and to see ourselves. From this point of view, differences fade to insignificance: Black/White or Brown, North, South, East or West, inside looking out or outside looking in, there is no distinction.”*

**Dave Dove,**  
Pastor of Vineyard Church

## QUOTES

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*Rancho Ceilo student*

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*Former ranking gang member  
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“Shifting peoples imagination about how to work with young people, how to work with the most troubled and to bring them out of their troubles through their own gifts and geniuses and capacity to be fuller human beings. The story is what is vital. There is no disconnect between what happens in the performance and the people watching it. They realize it is my story and they can connect with it. Live performance, like all these the stories we are talking about, it engages a part of you that does not get engaged. Art wakes up the deep self, the deep psyche. It is a place that needs to be awakened. Art does that in many ways.”

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